

The Enemy Among Us: POWs in Missouri During World War II

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his determined belief in local solutions and cooperative efforts rather than coercive federal mandates. Hoover certainly earned both titles of the Great Humanitarian and the Great Engineer, but he just couldn't project the image or emotion of the Great Communicator as the Great Depression demanded. As Smith concludes, Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover are still sadly not in vogue, but this collection of essays attempts to rediscover, reexamine, and reposition the various dimensions of the Hoovers' courageous lives as uncommon Americans.

The Enemy among Us: POWs in Missouri during World War II, by David Fiedler. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. xiv, 466 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Chad William Timm is a high school history teacher in Des Moines, a Ph.D. student at Iowa State University, and the author of a master's thesis at Iowa State University titled "Axis Prisoners of War in Iowa, 1943-1946: Harvesting Fields of Dreams" (2002).

In *The Enemy among Us*, author David Fiedler points out the little-known fact that between 1942 and 1945, more than 400,000 Axis prisoners of war were sent to the United States. In 1942 successful Allied campaigns against Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht in North Africa led to widespread captures of Axis prisoners. The British landscape could not accommodate the increasing number of prisoners, forcing the United States to aid in POW internment. Eventually, according to Fiedler, "POWs lived and worked in nearly every state in the country" (12).

Fiedler's book specifically portrays the experiences of the 15,000 German and Italian POWs who lived and worked in Missouri, as well as of those Missourians who came to know them. Using a diverse array of archival and contemporary sources, Fiedler describes each of Missouri's four main camps (Weingarten, Crowder, Clark, and Fort Leonard Wood) and 26 branch camps from inception to closing. He elaborates in fascinating detail on topics ranging from camp construction, escapes, POW labor, and education to recreation and community relations. Iowans should take particular interest in Fiedler's work, as our own state interned more than 10,000 German, Italian, and Japanese POWs between 1943 and 1946.

The Missouri camps experienced POW escapes, their labor programs were often opposed by organized labor, and Fascist extremists among the POW population struggled for control of their comrades. Despite such sporadic troubles, "the program was by and large a success" (411). Confirming what Arnold Krammer, the foremost scholar on the subject has said of POW camps across the country (in *Nazi Pris-*

oners of War in America [1979]), Fiedler argues that the men who lived in the Missouri camps "were humanely treated, and the experience was usually far more pleasant than they expected" (411). Fiedler notes that enemy prisoners received fair treatment in large part due to U.S. adherence to the Geneva Convention's regulations and War Department officials' belief that such treatment would yield "positive and highly desirable results": not only was promoting the principles of freedom and decency the right thing to do, but fair treatment of the POWs would also prepare them to create democracy when they returned home, and it would enhance the "smooth operation" of the camps, while negative treatment could lead to the poor treatment of American POWs in enemy camps (28-29).

This portrayal of the generally positive experience of both the POWs and ordinary citizens in Missouri is perhaps the most compelling aspect of *The Enemy among Us*. This aspect is particularly apparent in the stories of enemy prisoners who received warm welcomes when they returned to Missouri years after their repatriation. Fiedler quotes one former POW who stated upon his return, "Even though we don't have any relatives in the States, we feel very much at home here" (410).

The Enemy among Us is useful for those interested in Iowa's own experiences with enemy POWs during the World War II. Axis prisoners of war began arriving in Iowa in late 1943, when Page County farmers experienced a severe farm labor shortage. The DeKalb Agricultural Association contracted with the U.S. Army to create a temporary side camp, and 300 Italian POWs from Camp Weingarten, Missouri, handled the major share of DeKalb's detasseling work during the 1943 season. Over the next three years, more than 10,000 enemy soldiers were interned in Iowa's two main camps (Algona and Clarinda) and eleven branch camps. Differences exist between the Missouri and Iowa camps, particularly the presence of Japanese soldiers in Clarinda and Iowa's relatively greater need for agricultural labor, but the fair and humane treatment of the POWs, in addition to their generally positive experience, is an important commonality.

The Enemy among Us presents stand-alone histories of each Missouri camp. These descriptive narratives are particularly useful for those interested in specific camp histories, although the repetition is somewhat tedious for those trying to follow the book's overall narrative. Nonetheless, David Fiedler's book, alongside Dean Simmons's *Swords into Plowshares: Minnesota's POW Camps during World War II* and Robert Bollinger Jr.'s *Hitler's Soldiers in the Sunshine State: German POWs in Florida*, is a valuable and worthy contribution to the literature on enemy soldiers in the United States during World War II.

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